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British Columbia  
Provincial Secretary

Papers relating to breaches of  
the peace and destruction of  
property on the Indian Reserve

at Metlakatlah 1883

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## PAPERS

Relating to breaches of the peace and destruction of property on the Indian Reserve at Metlakatlah.

By Command.

JNO. ROBSON,

*Provincial Secretary's Office,  
19th December, 1883.*

*Provincial Secretary.*

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*The Secretary of State for Canada to the Lieutenant-Governor.*

OTTAWA, July 18th, 1883.

SIR,—The attention of His Excellency the Governor-General in Council having been called to the recent serious breaches of the peace and destruction of property on the Indian Reserve at Metlakatlah, in British Columbia, which, as His Excellency is informed, is entirely attributable to unhappy religious variances between His Lordship Bishop Ridley, the representative of the Church of England Missionary Society in British Columbia, and Mr. William Duncan, formerly lay Missionary of that Society at Metlakatlah, and who has recently severed his connection therewith, I am commanded to invite the attention of your Government to the questions in connection with this matter, which require early consideration.

These questions, it is obvious, appertain in the first place to the Provincial Government, whose care it should be to take steps to prevent the recurrence of such disgraceful disturbances as I have referred to, and for this purpose it is very desirable that a Stipendiary Magistrate should be stationed at some point on the North-West Coast, in the neighbourhood of Metlakatlah. It is considered further, that both Bishop Ridley and Mr. Duncan should be induced by your Government to relinquish their Commissions as Justices of the Peace, which they have shown themselves so ill-qualified to hold. It is very desirable that the boundaries of the tract of land, two acres in extent, which your Government has granted to the Church Missionary Society, of which Bishop Ridley is the Agent, should be forthwith defined, and a conveyance made of this land to the Society.

You will be so good as to report to me the decision of your Government in the foregoing suggestions, as soon as one is arrived at.

I have, &c.,  
(Signed)

M. BOWELL,  
*For Secretary of State.*

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*Rear-Admiral Lyons to the Lieutenant-Governor.*

"SWIFTSURE," ESQUIMALT,  
13th August, 1883.

SIR,—Whilst doing myself the honour of forwarding, for your information, the accompanying extracts from the report I propose sending to the Admiralty on the subject of my recent cruise in the "Mutine," I would venture to call Your Honour's attention to that portion of the paragraph in which I suggest the expediency of a Stipendiary Magistrate, one wholly unconnected with trade, being appointed to Metlakatlah. I may add that I was very forcibly struck at the general backward state of civilization in which I found the settlement at Alert Bay; it contrasted most unfavourably with any other place visited by me.

I have, &c.,

(Signed)

A. LYONS,  
*Commander-in-Chief.*

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*Extracts from the Report made by Rear Admiral Lyons to the Secretary of the Admiralty.*

I visited various posts on the North-West Coast of Vancouver, as also other adjacent British islands, and found that everything at each place was quiet and satisfactory.

On the 2nd instant (August, 1883), I arrived at Metlakatlah, the somewhat celebrated missionary station, situated towards the north-west boundary of British Columbia. There had been no renewal of disturbances such as took place in the early part of this year, but I was grieved to find that the relations between Bishop Ridley and Mr. Duncan, the late missionary, continued very strained, the latter gentleman exerting the great influence he undoubtedly possesses over the various Indian tribes to thwart the views, and in every way to show his antagonism to the Bishop. The result is that in a community of about 900 civilized Indians there are two distinct factions, the by far larger one supporting Mr. Duncan, who had for so many years ruled them.

Without entering into the questions at issue, I would express my conviction that the present, much to be deplored, state of affairs in this distant part of Her Majesty's dominions cannot but tend to defeat the advance of civilization and christianity amongst the Indian tribes. I purpose suggesting to the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, the expediency of the appointment of an intelligent Stipendiary Magistrate—one wholly unconnected with trade.

From Metlakatlah I proceeded to Port Simpson, on the extreme north-west limit of British Columbia. The only English people there were a Methodist Missionary, the school-master, and an agent of the Hudson's Bay Company, with their respective families. The Indian population consisted of about 850, the majority of whom were away hunting. The general advanced state of civilization of Port Simpson, the order and cleanliness of the town, and of its inhabitants, reflects much credit on Mr. Crosby, the missionary, to whose exertions this satisfactory condition of the settlement is mainly due.

Returning south, I called on the 7th inst. (August, 1883), at Masset, the principal town and seaport of the Queen Charlotte group of Islands. I learnt from the missionary, as also from the Hudson's Bay Company's agent, that everything there and in the neighbouring Islands continued quiet.

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*Copy of a Report of a Committee of the Honourable the Executive Council, approved by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor on the 9th October, 1883.*

The Committee of Council have had under consideration the despatch of the Honourable the Secretary of State, dated 18th July, 1883, relating to serious disturbances which lately took place at Metlakatlah and the destruction of property there, and suggesting the propriety of appointing a Stipendiary Magistrate in that neighbourhood, and the surrender of the commissions of Mr. Duncan and Bishop Ridley as Justices of the Peace; they have also had under their consideration extracts of a despatch from Admiral Lyons, dated 13th August, 1883, relating especially to Metlakatlah and the condition of affairs there, which were prominently brought under his notice on his late visit to that settlement; also suggesting the appointment of a Stipendiary Magistrate.

Metlakatlah is purely an Indian settlement, and no white men reside there except the missionaries and their families. The duty of controlling and managing the Indians on their reserves is especially the province of the Indian Commissioner, and the Committee, although strongly impressed with the evils alluded to in the above despatches, feel that the subject is one which ought not to be left to them to settle, except in so far as the preservation of peace and the administration of justice require the intervention of the Provincial Government. It is not only at Metlakatlah that these questions have been prominently brought to the notice of this Government, but in many other of the larger settlements; and the Committee respectfully suggest, that Indian Agents with, if needful, larger powers to deal with Indian disputes should reside at these localities.

The Indians in this Province do not contribute to the Provincial Revenue, yet a great portion of the costs of the administration of justice is caused by the Indians. They fill the Provincial gaols and are a continual source of expense and trouble. If fined for petty offences the penalty has to be appropriated according to the Indian Act.

To avoid this anomalous position of affairs, the Committee strongly urge on the Dominion Government the necessity of exercising a more thorough control over the native races, and the carrying out of some system whereby the Indian Agents can give them more efficient super-

vision than they do now ; and they submit that when the Indians do leave their reserves and engage in employment unconnected with their tribal duties, they ought to be subject to the same Provincial taxation as others.

A large number of Indians are engaged at the Canneries, and in packing, and on board vessels navigating the inland waters of this part of the Dominion, and compete in other ways with white labour.

The Committee, prior to the receipt of these despatches, have had the subject under serious consideration and have relieved the missionaries of their commissions, feeling convinced that the junction of civil power with missionary duties is incompatible.

The Committee advise that this Minute be approved, and that a copy be forwarded to the Honourable the Secretary of State for Canada.

Certified,

(Signed) JNO. ROBSON,  
*Clerk Executive Council.*

*The Provincial Secretary to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs.*

PROVINCIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE,  
Victoria, B. C., 22nd October, 1883.

SIR,—I beg to inform you that information has been communicated to the Government that serious troubles are likely to arise at Metlakatlah between the adherents of Bishop Ridley and the followers of Mr. Duncan.

The latter, who are in the majority, have, I am informed, demolished buildings erected by Bishop Ridley's Indians on the Indian Reserve, and threaten to repeat such conduct if the buildings are again put in course of construction. On the other hand, the minority insist they have the right and say they will defend it by force of arms.

I am now directed by the Executive to request that you will proceed to Metlakatlah for the purpose of directing the Indians and by your presence and council preventing a serious disturbance of the peace.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) JNO. ROBSON,  
*Provincial Secretary.*

*Mr. Moffatt to the Provincial Secretary.*

INDIAN OFFICE,  
Victoria, Oct. 23rd, 1883.

SIR,—I am directed by the Indian Superintendent to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd inst., and to inform you that he has communicated with the Honourable the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs upon the subject adverted to in the same.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) H. MOFFATT.

*The Provincial Secretary to the Honourable J. W. Trutch, C. M. G.*

VICTORIA, B. C., 24th October, 1883.

SIR,—The Government have had an interview with Mr. Clifford, J. P., who came to Victoria for the purpose of consulting them with reference to an apprehended outbreak at Metlakatlah.

It appears that the Indians at that settlement are divided into two parties, the large majority follow Mr. Duncan, the remainder, Bishop Ridley ; some Indians belonging to the minority commenced erecting a house on a piece of land in the village, they were at once stopped by some of the other party and their building pulled down.

Mr. Clifford was present at a meeting of the Indians held subsequently, and they then expressed themselves determined to carry out the policy thus commenced, although they knew it was contrary to law ; on the other hand, the minority express themselves equally determined to defend their rights with arms.

Mr. Clifford had several applications made to him to enforce the law against the rioters, but he put them off until his return; he himself is greatly apprehensive of a serious disturbance, which may possibly extend to the Indians employed at the canneries, as a variety of tribes are included in the Metlakatlah settlement.

The Government have addressed a strong letter to Dr. Powell, requesting him to go to Metlakatlah and try to arrange the difficulty, as the trouble is more or less connected with the smoothing over of the riot last winter without punishment.

The Provincial Government must enforce the law, but, if their information is correct, a strict enforcement at the present junction would precipitate an outbreak. They have represented to the Dominion Government the necessity of having an Indian Agent permanently established at Metlakatlah, and a stricter supervision kept over these large Indian settlements, but in the meanwhile the necessity is urgent, and they think it advisable that you should be made acquainted with the facts.

I have, &c.  
(Signed) JNO. ROBSON,  
*Provincial Secretary.*

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*Honourable J. W. Trutch, C. M. G., to the Provincial Secretary,*

DOMINION GOVERNMENT AGENT'S OFFICE,  
Victoria, B. C., 25th October, 1883.

SIR,—With reference to the subject-matter of your letter to me of yesterday's date, which I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of, and as to which I had the opportunity of conferring fully with yourself and your colleagues yesterday afternoon, I beg to inform you that I have both telegraphed and written to the Right Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald, Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, my views, which, as I gave you to understand at our interview yesterday, are substantially in accord with the representations and recommendations conveyed in your letter under reply.

I have, &c.,  
(Signed) JOSEPH W. TRUTCH,  
*Dominion Agent.*



